

## Comments before the Oncology Nursing Society

I thank you... first and foremost, for the work that you do every day. On my schedule this event is listed and an award for “long standing commitment to winning the war against cancer.” When I reflect on this, and as I stand before this group, I realize that the wrong person in this room is being honored.

Indeed, it is each of you that deserves this award. If you were add up the years that you all have spent curing cancer;  
or the number of grateful lives you have saved;  
or the number of worried families you have comforted;  
or the number of scared, hairless children you have hugged...  
only then would we have a clear picture of what a “long standing commitment to winning the war against cancer” truly is.

It is with this in mind, that I humbly say... thank you.

When a patient sits before an Oncology Nurse, not only is their arm extended, but their soul is exposed. The patient is very sick and often dying. The treatment the patient prays will save his or her life is often causing their body to fall apart. The patient is being attacked from the inside-out by their own cells and from the outside-in by the treatment.

It is an awful disease for a patient to fight; and it is an awful disease for a provider to treat.

For these reasons, I make the same commitment to you that you make to each of your patients... *I am going to do what everI can to eradicate this cancer.*

To do this I think we need to make some changes in how we, in Washington, approach the disease.

First, I think that we need a vision. As recent months have proven, this

country is best when we have a clear goal. I firmly believe that we must *set a date* by which cancer survivorship will be the rule and cancer mortality will be the exception.

Next, we need to get our own house in order. By the nature of the disease, many cancer patients are Medicare beneficiaries. It is not enough for CMS to understand with what chemicals cancer patients are treated and how much they cost.

I think that it is about time Medicare bureaucrats figure out how cancer patients are treated...

where cancer patients are treated...

and by whom cancer patients are treated...

It is about time that Medicare accurately reimburse for Oncology care.

Also, we need to ensure that with each passing day, Oncology professionals have new treatment options available. This fiscal year marks the final in our historic effort to double the NIH budget over a 5 year period. However, simply spending the money is not adequate. We must always keep in mind that we do not spend that money for researchers, we spend it for patients. Through revolutionary medical advances, increased participation in clinical trials, and efficient approval by FDA we need to give you more tools with which to treat your patients.

Finally, we need to be smart with the information that we already have. Cancer registries have provided us with a wealth of valuable information about cancer patients. We need to ensure that every level of government – from the Centers of Disease Control in Atlanta to the Public Health Department in Hays, Kansas – have access to and are using that information to save lives. Where there is a population that isn't getting screened for colon cancer, we have to know why not. Where we identify folks who are using sun screen, we need to get them the information. When someone receives the blessed news that they are in remission, they must know what to expect for the rest of their lives. I expect our public health infrastructure to be as aggressive as each of you are about saving

lives.

When I was a kid in Parker, Kansas, my father was diagnosed with Colon Cancer. As I speak, he is still in Parker, KS farming today.

Shortly after the people of Kansas saw fit to send me as their representative in Washington, I was diagnosed with skin cancer. Today, I still have the honor of representing Kansas in the United States Senate.

There is little worse than hearing that you, or a loved one, has been diagnosed with cancer.

There isn't much better news than hearing that you have been cured.

There are very few people as important to ensuring that a cancer patient survives than an Oncology Nurse.

For that, once again, I thank you.